

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 GUATEM 00517 281949Z

72

ACTION ARA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5697

INFO AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

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AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

AMEMBASSY MEXICO

C O N F I D E N T I A L GUATEMALA 0517

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ELAB, GT

SUBJECT: LABOR CONFEDERATION SPLITS

REF: GUATEMALA A-009

1. GUATEMALA'S LARGEST LABOR ORGANIZATION, THE FEDERATED WORKERS CENTRAL (CTF), WAS SPLIT IN TWO JANUARY 26 BY THE WITHDRAWAL FROM THE CTF OF AT LEAST PORTIONS OF TEN OF THE CENTRAL'S TWELVE MEMBER FEDERATIONS. THE DEPARTING FEDERATIONS HAVE REMAINED LOYAL TO ARTURO MORALES CUBAS, THE VETERAN LABOR LEADER WHO RECENTLY WAS DEPOSED AT CTF BOSS IN GOVERNMENT-SUPPORTED COUP.

2. MORALES' OVERTHROW HAD BEEN MADE POSSIBLE BY THE LABOR MINISTRY'S REFUSAL TO APPROVE THE ELECTION TO THE CTF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THREE OF MORALES' CLOSEST COLLABORATORS. THE MINISTRY LEGALLY RECOGNIZED SIX OTHER CTF LEADERS, WHO SAW IN THE MINISTRY'S ACTION AN OPPORTUNITY TO FREE THEMSELVES FROM MORALES' RULE.

3. MORALES ATTEMPTED TO HOLD A RALLY OF HIS LOYALISTS
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 GUATEM 00517 281949Z

AT THE CTF HEADQUARTERS JANUARY 25, BUT FOUND THE DOOR

BARRED TO HIM AND HIS FOLLOWERS. MEETING THE NEXT DAY AT THE OFFICE OF THE MUNICIPAL WORKERS UNION, THE MORALES GROUP DECLARED ITS INTENTION TO FORM A NEW CONFEDERATION - THE "AUTHENTIC FEDERATED WORKERS CENTRAL" (CTFA). A COMMITTEE COMPOSED OF MORALES CUBAS AND HIS INNER CIRCLE WAS NAMED TO "ADVISE" AND SEEK TO ORGANIZE LEGALLY THE NEW ORGANIZATION. A COMMUNIQUE ISSUED FOLLOWING THE MEETING DENOUNCED THE SIX LEGALLY RECOGNIZED CTF LEADERS FOR "SELLING" THE CENTRAL TO THE GOVERNMENT AND DECLARED THEM RESPONSIBLE, ALONG WITH THE LABOR MINISTER, FOR ANY REPRISALS WHICH WOULD BE TAKEN AGAINST MEMBERS OF THE NEW CONFEDERATION.

4. MORALES TOLD US JANUARY 27 THAT HE PLANNED ON THAT DAY TO REMOVE FROM THE CTF HEADQUARTERS FURNITURE AND EQUIPMENT, WHICH ALL REPORTEDLY ARE REGISTERED IN HIS NAME. MORALES EXPRESSED OPTIMISM CONCERNING THE FUTURE OF HIS NEW ORGANIZATION AND SAID HE PLANNED TO REVEAL "DOCUMENTED EVIDENCE" THAT THE NEW CTF LEADERS HAD ACCEPTED MONEY FROM THE LABOR MINISTRY.

5. COMMENT: MORALES' CLAIM TO CONTROL TEN OUT OF THE CTF'S TWELVE FEDERATIONS GREATLY EXAGGERATES HIS POSITION. AMONG THE TWO FEDERATIONS WHICH HE ADMITS LOSING IS FENSIL, AN AGRICULTURAL WORKERS' FEDERATION, WHICH PRIOR TO THE SPLIT WAS ESTIMATED TO REPRESENT 15,000 OUT OF THE CENTRAL'S 35,000 MEMBERS. SOME OF THE FEDERATIONS LOYAL TO MORALES HAVE NO MORE THAN A FEW HUNDRED MEMBERS AND OTHERS HAVE DIVIDED, WITH INDIVIDUAL UNIONS ADHERING TO BOTH FACTIONS. MANY CTF UNIONS APPEAR TO BE FENCE-SITTING UNTIL THE SITUATION BECOMES CLEARER.

6. THE CTF SPLIT LEAVES THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC LABOR CONFEDERATION (CNT) AS THE COUNTRY'S LARGEST TRADE UNION ORGANIZATION. FOR THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE, NEITHER THE REMAINING CTF STRUCTURE NOR THE MORALES FACTION WILL BE IN A POSITION TO EXERT MUCH LEADERSHIP WITHIN THE LABOR MOVEMENT. MEMBERS OF THE NEW CTF DIRECTORATE HAVE PRIVATELY ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THEY INTEND

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 GUATEM 00517 281949Z

TO REPLACE MORALES' OPPOSITIONIST STANCE WITH A MORE COOPERATIVE ATTITUDE TOWARD THE GOVERNMENT. MORALES KEPT CTF FINANCES UNDER HIS PERSONAL CONTROL AND THE NEW CTF LEADERS MAY FIND THEMSELVES SO IMPOVERISHED THAT THEY WILL WELCOME GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE.

7. THE SPLIT WILL FORCE ORIT TO MAKE SOME DIFFICULT CHOICES. AS HEIRS TO THE LEGAL STATUS (PERSONERIA

JURIDICA) OF THE CTF, THE CENTRAL'S NEW LEADERSHIP UNDOUBTEDLY WILL INSIST THAT IT CONTINUE TO REPRESENT GUATEMALA IN ORIT, WHILE MORALES' "AUTHENTIC CTF" MAY LAY CLAIM TO THE SAME SEAT. THE SMALL, GOVERNMENT-ALIGNED CSG (NOW CALLED THE CTSG) CAN BE EXPECTED TO RENEW ITS CAMPAIGN TO REPLACE THE CTF IN THE INTERAMERICAN BODY. THE NEW CTF LEADERS ALSO HAVE STATED THAT THEY PLAN TO ASK THAT THE CTF BE READMITTED TO THE CENTRAL AMERICAN WORKERS CONFEDERATION (CTCA), FROM WHICH MORALES WITHDREW LAST YEAR. WHATEVER GROUP IS ADMITTED TO ORIT OR CTCA, IT CAN REPRESENT NO MORE THAN A SMALL PERCENTAGE OF THE FRACTIONALIZED GUATEMALAN LABOR MOVEMENT.

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